



SELF-STUDY AND ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Section 1: Self-Study and Accreditation Protocols

To ensure that the diverse, developmental needs of MSA-CESS accredited and candidate institutions are met effectively, the Commissions on Elementary Secondary Schools shall provide a choice of self-study and accreditation protocols. Such protocols may be produced by the Commissions' staff, by other accrediting/evaluation agencies, or by commercial publishing organizations.

Approval of Self-Study and Accreditation Protocols. The Commissions shall approve, after review and analysis by the Commissions' staff and the Commissions' Membership and Accreditation Committees, all self-study and accreditation protocols authorized for use by institutions seeking MSA-CESS accreditation and reaccreditation.

List of Approved Self-Study and Accreditation Protocols. The Commissions shall maintain and make available to institutions a current list of approved self-study and accreditation protocols.

Criteria for Approving Self-Study and Accreditation Protocols. The Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools may approve self-study and accreditation protocols that meet the following criteria:

- a. well-aligned and consistent with the MSA-CESS Standards for Accreditation;
- b. meet the needs of accredited and candidate institutions;
- c. of high quality, well-written, and effectively designed;
- d. encourage schools, school systems, and other education institutions to base self-study and accreditation efforts on accomplishing the purposes and functions outlined in their own statements of philosophy/mission/beliefs; and
- e. promote continuous growth and improvement in student performance and/or organizational capacity.

MSA-CESS-Developed Self-Study and Accreditation Protocols.

- a. Protection of Protocols. Copyrights shall be maintained on self-study and accreditation protocols developed and approved by the Commissions.
- b. Revision of Self-Study and Accreditation Protocols. Self-study and accreditation protocols developed by the Commissions shall be reviewed and revised regularly to reflect current practices in education and accreditation and the needs of accredited and candidate institutions.

Section 2: Self-Study and Accreditation Protocol for Postsecondary Institutions

The Commission shall provide a self-study and accreditation protocol expressly designed for career and technical institutions. The protocol shall be reviewed and revised as necessary on an ongoing basis to keep it current with the requirements for recognition of the Commission by the U.S. Secretary of Education and current trends in the career/technical education field.

General. All eligible institutions that have declared their intention to use their MSA-CSS accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV, HEA, federal student loan programs are required to use the comprehensive, self-study and accreditation protocol approved by the Commission on Secondary Schools for that purpose—*Reflections on Standards of Quality (Career and Technical Version)*.

Approval of the Required Self-Study and Accreditation Protocol. The Commission shall approve, after review and analysis by the Commission's Membership and Accreditation Committee, all self-study and

accreditation protocols authorized for use by institutions seeking MSA-CSS accreditation and reaccreditation to establish eligibility for participation in federal Title IV student loan programs.

Criteria for Approving the Required Self-Study and Accreditation Protocol. The Commission on Secondary Schools shall use the following criteria for approving a self-study and accreditation protocol:

- a. Well-aligned and consistent with the MSA-CSS Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions;
- b. Compatible with current requirements of the U.S. Department of Education for—
 - 1) Institutions seeking eligibility to participate in federal Title IV student loan programs, and
 - 2) Recognition of the Commission as a Title IV gatekeeper.
- c. Of high quality, well-written, and effectively designed;
- d. Encourage institutions to base their self-study and accreditation efforts on accomplishing the purposes and functions outlined in their own Mission;
- e. Promote institutions' continuous growth and improvement in student performance and organizational capacity.

Content of the Required Self-Study and Accreditation Protocol. The required self-study and accreditation protocol includes procedures for the institution's self-assessment and evaluation of:

- a. The effectiveness and quality of each career and technical program offered by the institution;
- b. The degree to which the institution complies with the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions and their Indicators of Quality;
- c. The Standards for Student and Organizational Performance, including program completion rates, program completer job placement rates, licensing examination passing rates, and student loan default rate; and the Requirements of the Protocol;
- d. Assessment of educational quality and the institution's continuing efforts to improve educational quality; and
- e. The institution's plans to address weaknesses and to improve areas identified as priorities for growth and improvement.

Materials for the Self-Study and Accreditation Process. The Commission provides the following materials and technical support to institutions for the self-study and accreditation process at no additional cost:

- a. An electronic copy of the self-study and accreditation protocol;
- b. An electronic copy of the template for preparing and presenting the results of the self-study;
- c. If desired, electronic versions of the surveys to be used for conducting the self-assessment of the degree to which the institution is in compliance with the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions; and
- d. Technical assistance by telephone, e-mail, or web conferencing throughout the self-study process.

Section 3: Self-Study Process

The Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools grant accreditation to institutions based on information gathered during the Application for Candidacy phase, from the institution's self-study, and from information gathered and observations made during an onsite accreditation visit conducted by a team of peer evaluators appointed by the Commissions. Some of the requirements of the self-study and accreditation process are dictated by the protocol used.

Accreditation is awarded by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools based on the following criteria listed in MSA-CESS Policy: Accreditation Actions:

- a. The degree to which the institution demonstrates it meets the Standards for Accreditation;
- b. The degree to which the institution demonstrates it meets the requirements of the protocol used for self-study and accreditation;
- c. The degree to which the institution is accomplishing or making progress toward accomplishing the purposes and functions outlined in its own statement of philosophy/mission.

- d. Evidence of the degree to which the institution meets the Standards for Accreditation;
- e. Evidence of the degree to which the institution meets the requirements of the accreditation protocol used for self-study and accreditation; and
- f. Evidence of the degree to which the institution is making progress toward achieving its growth and improvement objectives and implementing its action plans for achieving its objectives.

Institutions that are Candidates for Accreditation must conduct a self-study, host an onsite accreditation visit, and be granted accreditation prior to the date set by the Commission for Candidacy to expire.

Institutions previously accredited by the Commission(s) must conduct a self-study, host and onsite accreditation visit, and be granted reaccreditation prior to the date set by the Commission for the institution's accreditation to expire.

MSA-CESS Policies Expectations for Accredited Institutions, and Accreditation Maintenance, set forth the requirements for accredited institutions to maintain their accreditation during the term of accreditation set by the Commission(s) and the consequences for failure to meet those requirements.

Self-Study and Accreditation Protocols.

- a. Use of Approved Self-Study and Accreditation Protocols. Institutions conducting a self-study as part of the accreditation process must use a protocol approved for use by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.
- b. Changes to Approved Self-Study and Accreditation Protocols Not Permitted. Institution's may not make changes to the approved protocols without prior permission of the Commissions' staff.

Adequacy of the Institution's Self-Study Document. The institution's self-study document is a fundamental aspect of the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools' accreditation process. It provides the basis on which the team of visitors appointed by the Commission(s) makes its accreditation recommendations to the Commission(s). Therefore, if the Chair of the Visiting Team and the President of the Commissions concur that the institution's self-study document is incomplete, inadequate, or not received in time for the visiting team to prepare for a visit, the visit may be cancelled or postponed until such time as the institution is deemed ready to proceed. Any additional costs incurred by such cancellation or rescheduling shall be assumed by the institution.

Distribution of the Institution's Self-Study Document. The institution shall distribute, well in advance of a team visit, complete copies of its self-study document to the Commissions' staff, to the Chair of the Visiting Team, and to all members of the Visiting Team.

Retention of the Institution's Self-Study Document. The institution may request that members of the Visiting Team, with the exception of the Chair of the Visiting Team, return their copies of the self-study document at the end of the team's visit.

Section 4: Visiting Teams

Authority of Chair and Visiting Team Members. Members of a visiting team appointed by the Commission(s) serve as agents of the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools for accreditation purposes during their service to the institution being visited.

Composition of Visiting Teams.

- a. The Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools' accreditation process includes an onsite visit by a team of peer educators from other MSA-CESS accredited/candidate institutions.

- b. Therefore, team members shall, in most cases, be practicing and/or recently retired experienced educators.
- c. In developing visiting teams, consideration will be given to the institution's unique characteristics and local needs.
- d. All visiting teams to postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology institutions that use or intend to use their Middle States accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV financial aid programs shall include a mix of academic (with subject matter experts in the occupational fields within the institution) and administrative educators.

Qualifications of Members of Visiting Teams. The members of a visiting team must possess the following minimum qualifications:

- a. A Bachelor's Degree from a recognized college/university;
- b. Three years' successful teaching in school/schools accredited by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools or other recognized accrediting agency.

Training of Visiting Team Members.

- a. Chairs of Visiting Teams. Prior to serving as a Chair of Visiting Teams, those nominated to be trained will complete successfully a one-day chair training session conducted by the staff of the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.
- b. Members of Visiting Teams. Members of Visiting Teams will undergo training and orientation conducted by the Chair of the Team prior to the start of a visit using the training and orientation procedures provided by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.

Role of a Visiting Team. The role of a visiting team is to make a recommendation to the appropriate Commission(s) regarding the degree to which the institution 1) meets the Middle States Standards for Accreditation and 2) the requirements of the protocol the institution selected for self-study and accreditation. The team's assessments and recommendations must be made within the context of the institutions philosophy/mission.

Disqualification of Team Members. A person nominated by the Commission(s) to be the chair or a member of a visiting team, may be disqualified, for cause, by the institution being visited.

Observers on Visiting Teams. Under special circumstances and with the approval of the President of the Commissions and the institution to be visited, observers may be permitted to accompany a visiting team. An observer is defined as an individual who is not chosen by the Commissions' staff to serve as a member of a visiting team but who participates in all activities of the team except for deliberations of the visiting team and the decisions of the team.

- a. An individual may request to be an observer by making the request writing to the President/Executive Director of the Commission. An observer is assigned to a visiting team only after receiving the approval of the President/Executive Director of the institution to be visited.
- b. An example of an observer might be a member of the staff of the U.S. Department of Education assigned to observe the conduct of the Commissions' accreditation activities.

Section 5: Accreditation Visiting Teams for Postsecondary Institutions

General. One of the requirements for accreditation/reaccreditation by the Commission on Secondary Schools is to host an onsite visit by a team of educators appointed for that purpose by the Commission.

Criteria for Accreditation Visiting Teams. Accreditation Visiting Teams shall comply with the following criteria:

- a. Competent and knowledgeable individuals, qualified by education and experience in their own right and trained by the Commission on their responsibilities, as appropriate for their roles, regarding the

- Commission's standards, policies, and procedures, to conduct its on-site evaluations, apply or establish its policies, and make its accrediting candidacy, including, if applicable to the Commission's scope, their responsibilities regarding distance education;
- b. Academic and administrative personnel;
 - c. Educators and practitioners; and
 - d. Persons without a conflict of interest [see MSA-CESS Policy: Conflict of Interest].

Chairs of Accreditation Visiting Teams. The policy of the Commission is to select highly qualified educators to serve on as Chairs of Accreditation Visiting Teams to ensure the most effective accreditation evaluation of institutions seeking accreditation or re-accreditation.

- a. Selection Criteria. Chairs of Visiting Teams shall possess the following qualifications:
 - 1) An educator that has been determined by the staff of the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools to have sufficient education and experience to be able to recognize quality in a career and technical institution;
 - 2) An active or retired educator with significant experience in career and technical institutions below degree granting level;
 - 3) Trained by the staff of the Commission as a Chair of Accreditation Visiting Teams for career and technical institutions below the degree granting level;
 - 4) Demonstrated competence in determining quality in career and technical institutions and their programs, operations, leadership and staff;
 - 5) Demonstrated writing skills;
 - 6) Able to ensure that activities prescribed for an Accreditation Visiting Team are accomplished within the identified time frame; and
 - 7) Able to produce a Report of the Visiting Team within six to eight weeks following the team's visit.
- b. Typically, Chairs of Accreditation Visiting Teams will be assigned to Chair teams visiting institutions outside their own state and are not assigned to neighboring or competing institutions or to institutions in which they have a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest (see MSA-CESS Policy: Conflict of Interest).

Training of Chairs of Accreditation Visiting Teams.

- a. Training of prospective Chairs of Accreditation Visiting Teams to career and technical institutions will be conducted by a qualified member of the Commission's staff.
- b. The training for prospective Chairs of Accreditation Visiting Teams shall include:
 - 1) Introduction to the Middle States accreditation process and the importance and ethics of the Accreditation Visiting Team;
 - 2) The Self-Study and Accreditation Protocol, the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions, the Indicators of Quality for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, the Program Assessment Template, and the Plan for Growth and Improvement;
 - 3) Conducting the Accreditation Team Visit and writing the Report of the Visiting Team; and
 - 4) The logistics of the Accreditation Team Visit.

Members of Accreditation Visiting Teams.

- a. Selection Criteria. Members of Accreditation Visiting Teams will meet the following criteria:
 - 1) Recommended by a qualified Chair of an Accreditation Visiting Team, the head of a Middle States accredited institution, a state or county department of education, or the Commissions' staff;
 - 2) Expertise or experience relevant to the level(s) of education offered by the institution being visited and able to recognize quality in a career and technical institution;
 - 3) Willing to certify that they have no perceived or actual conflict of interest in the institution to be visited;
 - 4) Willing to certify that all documents and information will be treated in a confidential manner (see MSA-CESS Policy: Conflict of Interest);

- 5) Demonstrated writing skills using a computer and using Microsoft Word;
 - 6) Able to conduct activities, to work in a group, and to accomplish assigned tasks within the identified time frame.
- b. Typically, Members of Accreditation Visiting Teams will be assigned to teams visiting institutions outside their own state and are not assigned to neighboring or competing institutions or to institutions in which they have a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest (see MSA-CESS Policy: Conflict of Interest).

Composition of Accreditation Visiting Teams.

- a. The size and composition of the Accreditation Visiting Team shall be determined by: a) the number of the institution's programs, staff members, students, and campuses, 2) the distance between campuses, and 3) whether the purpose of the visit is for initial accreditation or reaccreditation as guided by the following parameters:
- 1) The number of team members will be adequate to perform the required tasks and to conduct a thorough accreditation evaluation of the institution;
 - 2) Team members will possess education and expertise in one or more of the career and technical or academic programs provided by the institution;
 - 3) Team members may be assigned to evaluate a cluster of similar programs; and
 - 4) The team may include public members or a member of the Commission's staff.
- b. Accreditation Visiting Teams shall be composed of members representing all the following categories:
- 1) Educators with administrative experience;
 - 2) Educators with a teaching experience and expertise in the career/technical fields within the institution they are assigned to evaluate;
 - 3) If the institution to be evaluated delivers all or part of its education program by one or more distance modalities, an appropriate portion of the members of the Accreditation Visiting Team must have expertise and experience relevant to distance education.

Training of Members of the Accreditation Visiting Team. All members of an Accreditation Visiting Team will be trained prior to the start of an accreditation visit using Commission-developed training materials that include training in the following:

- a. The Commission has prepared a Power Point program and accompanying script that provides the training required for all members of an Accreditation Visiting Team to a career and technical institution. Chairs of Accreditation Visiting Teams must use these training materials to ensure that all Accreditation Visiting Teams receive the same training for all elements of the required training.
- b. The required training for members of the Accreditation Visiting Team to a career and technical institution is provided to the Chair of the Team as a Power Point training program and an accompanying script so the chair can project the Power Point program and read the accompanying script.
- c. The training Power Point program and accompanying script includes:
- 1) Introduction to the Middle States accreditation process and the importance and ethics of the Visiting Team;
 - 2) The Self-Study and Accreditation Protocol, the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions, the Indicators of Quality for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, the Program Assessment Template , and the Plan for Growth and Improvement;
 - 3) Conducting the Accreditation Team Visit and writing the Report of the Visiting Team; and
 - 4) The logistics of the Accreditation Team Visit.

Section 6: The Accreditation Onsite Visit

Open Access. All aspects of the institution, except student and personnel records protected by applicable privacy laws, shall be made available to a visiting team appointed by the Commissions and to the staff of the Commissions, its advisory committees, the appropriate Membership and Accreditation Committee(s)

of the Commission, and to the Commissions on Elementary Schools and/or the Commission on Secondary Schools throughout the onsite visit and the entire review and accreditation action processes by the Commission's staff, its advisory committees, the Membership and Accreditation Committee(s) of the Commissions, and the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.

Stakeholder Comments. When an onsite visit is scheduled by the Commissions for initial accreditation (candidates for accreditation) or reaccreditation, notices will be posted in publicly available places by both the Commissions and the institution advising the institution's community of stakeholders and other interested third-parties that the Commissions will accept comments regarding the institution's ability to meet the Middle States Standards for Accreditation and that these comments will be considered in the course of the onsite visit by the team appointed by the Commission. The notices must include:

- a. That only comments that relate directly to the institution's ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation will be considered;
- b. The web address at which the Middle States Standards for Accreditation can be viewed;
- c. The requirement that comments must be in writing and include the stakeholder's name and affiliation with the institution;
- d. The requirement that comments must be received not later than 30 days prior to the first day of the onsite visit; and
- e. The Commission on Secondary School's address (mailing and e-mail) to which comments may be sent.

Public notice shall be made by at least two means that are accessible to the institution's stakeholders. Examples include the institution's website and notice in a local newspaper.

The purpose of this policy is to provide stakeholders who are not part of the institution's self-study process the opportunity to provide input regarding the institution's ability to meet the Middle States Standards for Accreditation.

Because comments by stakeholders provide the Commission(s) with information or evidence regarding an institution's ability to meet Standards for Accreditation, the President shall provide any comments received to the head of the institution prior to the onsite visit by the visiting team. The institution will be invited to respond to the comments and/or provide evidence to respond to the comments received. The institution may respond in a separate report or as an element of the self-study document submitted to the visiting team and the Commission(s).

All comments received by the President that meet the requirements of this policy and any response to the comments by the institution shall be provided to the Chair of the Visiting Team. The Chair of the Visiting Team shall consider the comments and any response by the institution along with other evidence observed during the visit when determining whether the institution meets the Standard(s) for Accreditation that are the subject of the comments. However, it shall not be the responsibility of the Visiting Team to resolve any personal or individual issues presented in the comments.

The Visiting Team shall not recommend or require any action of the institution based on comments by stakeholders unless the comments have been confirmed by other evidence observed by the Team.

Section 7: Accreditation Onsite Visit for Postsecondary Institutions

General. The culminating accreditation activity following completion of the institution's self-study is an onsite visit by a team of educators appointed by and representing the Commission on Secondary Schools.

The Onsite Accreditation Visit.

- a. The Commission shall schedule and conduct an onsite accreditation visit. The purpose of which is to:

- 1) Observe the operation of the institution;
 - 2) Gather and analyze evidence of compliance with the requirements for accreditation; and
 - 3) Prepare a written Report of the Visiting Team, including the Team's observations, findings, and recommendations regarding an accreditation action.
- b. The typical length of an onsite accreditation visit is three and one-half days.
- 1) The first day is one half day for training and orientation of the Visiting Team;
 - 2) On days two through one-half of day four the Team conducts its business of evaluating the institution for accreditation/reaccreditation purposes; and
 - 3) The final day is dedicated to following up on tasks remaining to be completed and delivery of the exit oral report.
- c. The accreditation visiting team shall comply with the requirements in The Accreditation Visiting Team Section of this policy.

Section 8: Reports of Team Visits. All institutions shall have regular, onsite team visits that are followed by a written team report in which the team reports to the institution and the Commission(s) its observations and recommendations regarding the accreditation action the Commission(s) should take.

Responsibility of the Chair of a Visiting Team. The chair of a visiting team is responsible for making necessary preparations for the team's visit and for preparing and providing to the institution visited and the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools the report of the team's visit.

Corrections of Errors of Fact. Prior to submitting a visiting team's report to the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools, the chair of the visiting team shall provide the institution an opportunity to review the team's report for correction of errors of fact. This review shall not include requests for changes to the content of the report unless such content is clearly incorrect.

Responsibility of the Head of the Institution. The head of the institution is responsible for 1) reviewing the report of the visiting team for correction of errors of fact, 2) responding to the observations and recommendations in the team's report when given the opportunity to do so, and 3) distributing the final report provided by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools in compliance with Policy 1.2.4.--Expectations for Accredited Institutions.

Contents of the Report of the Visiting Team. The written report of the visiting team shall include judgments regarding 1) the institution's adherence to the appropriate Standards for Accreditation and 2) the institution's adherence to the requirements of the protocol selected by the institution for self-study and accreditation.

Limits of the Report of a Visiting Team. Neither the report of a visiting team nor any of its subsections is to be considered an evaluation of any individual member of the institution's staff, but rather as a professional appraisal of the institution's adherence to Standards for Accreditation and the requirements of the protocol selected by the institution for self-study and accreditation.

The Institution's Response to the Report of a Visiting Team. Upon receipt of the final report of a visiting team from the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools, institutions shall have the right to provide, within 30 days of receipt of the report, the institution's response to the visiting team's observations and recommendations. The institution's response shall be attached permanently to the final report of the visiting team and accompany the team's report through the Commissions' four-step review process and when the Commission(s) votes to take an accreditation action regarding the institution.

Section 9: Reports of Team Visits for Postsecondary Institutions.

General. Visiting Teams record and report their observations, findings, and recommendations in a Report of the Visiting Team that is presented to the institution and to the Commission for an accreditation action.

The Report of the Visiting Team. The Visiting Team shall provide the institution and the Commission a detailed written report that includes the Team's observations, findings, and recommendations regarding the institution's compliance with:

- a. The Standards for Accreditation of Career and Technical Institutions, including areas needing improvement;
- b. Program Assessment Template;
- c. The Indicators of Quality for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; and
- d. The requirements of the *Reflections on Standards of Quality (Career and Technical Version) Self-Study and Accreditation Protocol*.

Template for the Report. The template for the Report of the Visiting Team is embedded in the template for the institution's Self-Study Document.

Limits of the Report of the Visiting Team. Neither the Report of the Visiting Team nor any of its subsections is to be considered an evaluation of any individual member of the institution's staff, but rather a professional appraisal of whether the institution meets the Standards and requirements noted above.

Responsibilities of the Chair of the Visiting Team. The Chair of the Visiting Team is responsible for:

- a. Ensuring that the members of the Visiting Team use and complete all sections of the template provided for the Report of the Visiting Team;
- b. Preparing a draft of the Report within 45 days after the onsite visit;
- c. Prior to submitting the Report of the Visiting Team to the Commission on Secondary Schools, providing the institution an opportunity to review the draft of the Report for correction of errors of fact. [The institution's review shall not include requests for changes to the content of the report.]
- d. Making any corrections of errors of fact to the draft of the Report; and
- e. Providing the Commission with a final version of the Report of the Visiting Team within six to eight weeks following the visit.

Rights and Responsibilities of the Head of the Institution. The head of the institution is responsible for:

- a. Reviewing the draft Report of the Visiting Team for correction of errors of fact;
- b. Upon receiving the final Report of the Visiting Team from the Commission and, if so desired, provide, within 30 days of receipt of the Report, a written response to any aspects of the findings and recommendations of the Report. The institution's response shall be attached permanently to the final Report of the Visiting Team and accompany the Report through the Commission's four-step review process and when the Commission takes an accreditation action regarding the institution (d);
- c. Responding to the observations, findings, and recommendations in the Report when given the opportunity to do so;
- d. Taking actions to address any Monitoring Issues and Stipulations to Accreditation within the time prescribed in the Official Notification of Accreditation Letter; and
- e. Sharing the contents of the final version of the Report of the Visiting Team provided by the Commission with the institution's community of stakeholders.

Section 10: Review of the Report of the Visiting Team and the Institution's Response to the Report.

Upon receipt of a Report of the Visiting Team from the Chair of the Visiting Team and the Institution's Response to the Report of the Visiting Team (if submitted), the Commission's staff shall begin the four-level review process, which is the Commission's procedure for ensuring that the Standards for Accreditation and other requirements for accreditation are applied as consistently as possible for all institutions that are presented to the Commission for an accreditation action.

Upon receipt of a Report of the Visiting Team from the Chair of the Visiting Team and the Institution's Response to the Report of the Visiting Team (if submitted), the Commission's staff shall

- 1) Conduct its own analysis of the self-study and supporting documentation furnished by the institution, the Report of the Visiting Team, the institution's response to the report, and any other appropriate information from other sources to determine whether the institution complies with the Commission's Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of the Protocol;
- 2) Begin the four-level review process, which is the Commission's procedure for ensuring that the Standards for Accreditation and other requirements for accreditation are applied as consistently as possible for all institutions that are presented to the Commission for an accreditation action.

First Level Review. Upon receipt of the institution's Self-Study Document, the Report of the Visiting Team, and the Institution's Response to the Report of the Visiting Team, the Commission's staff shall conduct the first-level review of the accreditation recommendation of the Visiting Team. Based on the evidence presented in the Self-Study, the Report of the Visiting Team, and the Institution's Response to the Report of the Visiting Team (if submitted), the staff will determine if it agrees with the Visiting Team's accreditation recommendation, or it makes a different recommendation.

Second Level Review. The institution's Self-Study Document, the Report of the Visiting Team, the Institution's Response to the Report of the Visiting Team, and the accreditation recommendation of the Visiting Team and the Commission's staff are presented to the appropriate Advisory Committee. Based on the evidence presented in the Self-Study, the Report of the Visiting Team, the Institution's Response to the Report of the Visiting Team (if submitted), and the staff's recommendation, the Committee will determine if it agrees with the Visiting Team's accreditation recommendation and/or the staff's recommendation, or it makes a different accreditation recommendation.

Third Level Review. The institution's Self-Study Document, the Report of the Visiting Team, the Institution's Response to the Report of the Visiting Team, the accreditation recommendation of the Visiting Team and the Commission's staff, and the accreditation recommendation of the Domestic Schools Advisory Committee are presented to the Commission's Membership and Accreditation Committee. Based on the evidence presented in the Self-Study, the Report of the Visiting Team, the Institution's Response to the Report of the Visiting Team (if submitted), the accreditation recommendations of the Visiting Team, the Commission's staff, and the Advisory Committee, the Membership and Accreditation Committee will determine if it agrees with the accreditation recommendation of the Visiting Team, the Commission's staff's, and/or the Domestic Schools Advisory Committee, or it makes a different accreditation recommendation.

Fourth Level Review. The institution's Self-Study Document, the Report of the Visiting Team, the Institution's Response to the Report of the Visiting Team, the accreditation recommendations of the Visiting Team, the Commission's staff, the Domestic Schools Advisory Committee, and the Membership and Accreditation Committee are presented to the Commission on Secondary Schools for review and the taking of an accreditation action. Based on the evidence presented in the Self-Study, the Report of the Visiting Team, the Institution's Response to the Report of the Visiting Team (if submitted), the accreditation recommendations of the Visiting Team, the Commission's staff, Advisory Committee, and the Membership and Accreditation Committee, the Commission determines if it accepts the accreditation recommendation of the Visiting Team, the Commission's staff, the Advisory Committee, and/or the Membership and Accreditation Committee, or it takes a different accreditation action.

Section 11: Mid-Term Review. Institutions accredited by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools must complete a mid-term review process defined as follows:

Institutions Granted Accreditation for Five Years with Possible Additional Five-Year Renewal.

- a. In the fourth year of the term of accreditation, submit a Five-Year Renewal Report; and
- b. Host a Five-Year Renewal Visit; and
- c. Be recommended by the Five-Year Visitor, the Commissions' staff, the appropriate Advisory Committee, and the appropriate Membership and Accreditation Committee(s) for accreditation for the remainder of their ten-year term.

Institutions Granted Accreditation for Seven Years.

- a. At the beginning of the third year of the term of accreditation, submit a Mid-Term Review Report;
- b. *For institutions in their first term of accreditation by the Commissions on Elementary and/or Secondary Schools:* host an on-site visit by a Reviewer appointed by the Commission(s) to verify the contents of the Mid-Term Review Report and ensure the institution continues to meet the Standards for Accreditation;
- c. *For institutions in their second or subsequent terms of accreditation by the Commission on Elementary and/or Secondary Schools:*
 - 1) If the Commissions' staff determines that the institution's Mid-Term Report is acceptable and presents no issues requiring verification through an onsite visit, no visit is required, and the institution's accreditation continues for the remainder of the seven-year term;
 - 2) If the Commission's staff determines that the report presents issues that require follow-up through an onsite visit, a visit is scheduled;
 - 3) An institution may request a Mid-Term Visit even if a visit is not required.

Institutions Granted Accreditation through the Self-Study and Accreditation Protocol of a Cooperating Agency. Institutions granted a term of accreditation by the Commissions based on the institution's having completed successfully the self-study and accreditation requirements of an agency with which the Commissions have a cooperating agreement must meet the Mid-Term Review requirements of the cooperating agency.